

MOVIE HIGHLIGHTS

DOC HOLLYWOOD



Michael J Fox is in top form as a doctor more interested in a chance at the good life than playing doctor in a public hospital. When we first see him, he is slaving away in a run-down Washington hospital earning little money. Then his chance arrives: apply for a job as a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon, take advantage of every curvaceous girl in your path, sit back and watch the ebb and flow of the money pouring in.

So Dr. Stone heads off to this land of milk and honey in his fancy Porsche. Then tragedy strikes: his car crashes "into" a small country town, squash capital of the USA, and he is left stranded in a one-horse town, destined to live an unpredictable existence. Stone's life is not turning out how he planned it; worse still, he falls in love with a beautiful ambulance driver. Definitely not on his agenda!

Doc Hollywood is a gentle romantic comedy from director Michael Caton-Jones, who previously brought us *Scandal* and *Memphis Belle*. It can be easily described as a 'feel-good' movie, and it is. It's an old-fashioned kind of film, something rare from mainstream Hollywood. Michael J Fox fans will love it, and its popularity in the US will no doubt be repeated here.

Paul Fischer

Doc Hollywood is scheduled for release on October 10.

Top left: Michael J Fox
Left: Dr Stone's love interest,
played by Julie Warner
Below: Michael J Fox and Julie Warner



ON
LOCATIONPreview goes on the set of
**THE GREAT
PRETENDER**

Perth, 1957. Rock 'n' roll was in its infancy, post-war conservatism was rife and teenagers still thought a lot about sex. David Elfick's *The Great Pretender* is a new Australian film comedy which recently wrapped on location in Perth and Kalgoorlie.

It's essentially the story of a teenage lad, his excessive libido and the need to rid himself of his virginity whilst also searching for love in small town Australia. Unlike most Australian period films which have an earthy, dark texture, director Elfick, who has won international acclaim for his TV trilogy *Fields of Fire*, has used colour in a unique way. "It's a much brighter film, full of rich colours, which makes it stylistically different from a lot of period films made here."

The film contains an impressive cast of new and familiar faces, which include 17-year old Craig Adams (soon to be seen in the acclaimed *Holidays On The River Yarra*) in the central role of Ken, an artistic sixteen-year old with

a rampant libido and a fascination with the opposite sex.

Director Elfick describes Ken as "one of those boys that didn't make the football team. He wears glasses and is a little bit 'off-beat', with a fervent interest in the opposite sex. He's quite a character; very endearing and vulnerable with a good sense of humour." The director believes that Craig Adams is a major find. "If you look at the history of Australian cinema, most of our stars succeeded as a result of particular projects.

Nobody had heard of Mel Gibson until *Mad Max* or Judy Davis

until she did *My Brilliant Career*. Craig's success as an actor will depend on the films he does as much as his inherent talent, and I'm sure that he's a major find." The actor describes his character as someone "who has all the knowledge of a lot of things, but has never experienced them."

Joining Craig in front of the camera are Russell Crowe, winning rave reviews for *Proof*, who plays a bureaucratic Welshman whose own conservative background comes in for a bit of a hammering. Rhonnda Findleton, seen recently in the Australian episode of *Inspector Morse*, plays Ken's divorced mother, and talented Martin Sacks (*Emoh Ruo*) plays a salesman and town romeo.

The idea for *The Great Pretender* began in the bar of the Royal Perth Yacht Club, whereby Elfick and wealthy entrepreneur Ron Clarke discussed life's early frustrations and inhibitions, and a film was born through a schooner of beer. David says that he enjoyed the experience of directing this 1950's coming-of-age comedy "apart from the incessant rain and Rhondda Findleton's conjunctivitis." He wants to see the film released by mid-January 1992, and according to all reports, it's another Aussie film worth waiting for.

Paul Fischer



A roundup of new films in production

Jack Nicholson gets to play a small time crook with a heart of gold in his next film, *Man Trouble*. His co-star is Ellen Barkin who calls for his assistance in "looking after her and the place" when she babysits the home of her sister (Beverly D'Angelo). The role played by Jack was offered to both Robert De Niro and Al Pacino before Nicholson. Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange and Meryl Streep were all considered for the female lead and Barkin landed the part almost by default since Streep had all but signed up for it. Delays in negotiations - she wanted \$1 million more than her regular \$4 million fee plus a share of the gross to match the \$8 million plus 20% of the gross offered to Nicholson - followed by Streep falling pregnant, led to her pulling out, leaving the way clear for Barkin, who jumped at the opportunity to play a different type of character to the tough women of her previous roles.



Jack Nicholson

Pen Densham who co-scripted the current *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* with fellow producer John Watson, has confirmed that he has already written an outline for a proposed *Prince of Thieves II*. The success of the Kevin Costner starring film has led him to prepare a more detailed script and make an initial approach to Costner to reprise the role. Neither Costner nor Densham have given any indication as to the actor's interest in a sequel.

Peter Weller and Robert Hayes will next be seen together in *50/50*, an action adventure filmed in Malaysia which examines the perils of over-throwing the government of an island nation. Its director is Charles Martin Smith (*Starman*). Weller will also appear in David Cronenberg's film adaptation of William S Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* with Ian Holm, Roy Scheider and Julian Sands.

Director James Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant, who made the film versions of E. M. Forster's *A Room With a View* and *Maurice*, return to Forster's literary works for their next project, *Howard's End*, about the British upper class. Helena Bonham Carter, Vanessa Redgrave and James Wilby, who will be familiar to audiences of former Ivory/Merchant productions, are joined by Anthony Hopkins in the new film.

After a string of what he calls "coat and tie jobs", Harrison Ford has returned to the action adventure genre for his next film, titled *Night Ride Down*. Ford plays a railway executive in 1934 who embarks on a train journey in pursuit of his kidnapped daughter. From the director of the Al Pacino/Ellen Barkin thriller, *Sea of Love*, Harold Becker.

Michelle Pfeiffer has scored the coveted role of Catwoman in *Batman II*, following the withdrawal of Annette Bening who has fallen pregnant. In order to fulfil the role, Pfeiffer herself has had to withdraw from *Mr Jones* in which she was to have starred opposite Richard Gere.

Inspired by the popularity of the opening scenes in *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* which showed Indy as a teenager, George Lucas has rushed a TV series called *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* into production. The \$20 million series, being filmed in Barcelona, Spain by director Terry Jones, stars Sean Patrick Flanery as "Junior".

Arnold Schwarzenegger, fresh from the success of *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, has begun work on his next project with director Paul Verhoeven, an action adventure about the search for the Holy Grail in the time of the Crusades. The concept for the film came when Schwarzenegger and Verhoeven were throwing about ideas for a future project together during the shoot of *Total Recall*. They both agreed that the time of the crusades was a fascinating time period

which has been neglected by Hollywood and decided there and then to work towards doing something in the latter half of 1991. The film should be ready for the US Summer season of 1992.

In brief

Mick Jagger and Emilio Estevez are to play the hunter (Jagger) and his prey in the futuristic bounty hunter adventure, *Free-Jack* ... Charles Dance and Charles Dutton have joined the cast of *Aliens III*, which is scheduled for a North American theatrical release during the last months of 1991 ... Brigitte Nielsen will star in the sequel to *976-Evil* ... Peter Bogdanovich directs Carol Burnett, Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve and John Ritter in *Noises Off*, a comic farce about a touring company that is putting on a crazy farce ... Samantha Mathis, who shone in *Pump Up The Volume*, joins Dan Aykroyd in *This Is My Life*, a comedy/drama about two sisters who grow up seeing more of their comedian mother on TV than at home.





Terminator 2: Judgement Day



The Commitments



Doc Hollywood

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

M (15+)

No film has arrived with as much fanfare or eagerness as *Terminator 2*. We've read about the film's inflated budget and its enormous success at the box office (\$5 million a day in the US). The bottom line is: how does the film ultimately measure up? All I can say is, forget what the movie cost - it's all up there on the screen and is fantastic all the way.

In this special effects-laden sequel, Arnold's original terminator is reprogrammed to return to earth in order to protect Sarah Connor's young son John, who is destined to grow up and lead a rebellion against a group of robots who take over the earth following its nuclear destruction.

Sarah herself (Linda Hamilton) has been locked up in a mental institution while son John has been living with foster parents. After he and his new found protector help Sarah to escape, they discover a way to alter the future entirely, by preventing a would-be nuclear war and thus reshaping their own destinies.

T2 is a mind-boggling conglomeration of visual effects, a masterful and extraordinary example of movie-making at its best. While the production costs may seem excessive, the end product is up there on the screen, from complex effects to larger-than life sets. The film is as thematically interesting as its design. It explores the nature of mankind's imminent destruction and the way in which we shape our destiny. (Of course, when one sets about analysing *T2*, many inconsistencies arise, but who cares?) Seeing this film is an aural and visual experience not to be missed.

The performances are all fine, with Schwarzenegger proving that with or without dialogue, he's a major screen presence and he certainly dominates the movie at every turn. But the real star of the film is director James Cameron, a master of visual movie making, who succeeds in taking his audience on a riveting journey that is akin to a rollercoaster ride. *Terminator 2* deserves all its success and acclaim; it's one of the most exciting movie events of the year.

THE COMMITMENTS

(M) 15+

British director Alan Parker (*Fame*, *Come See The Paradise*) goes from strength to strength. For the first time since *Pink Floyd The Wall*, this acclaimed film maker has worked outside the US and produced an energetic, wonderfully comic film about an Irish soul band, akin to Parker's very popular *Fame*. *The Commitments* is based on a popular novel by

Roddy Doyle and tells of a working-class Dublin lad, Jimmy, obsessed with the idea of forming Ireland's first soul band. The film explores the pain, humour and evolution of a band called The Commitments and its unique eccentricities, coupled with the individualism of the band members. Jimmy ultimately discovers that along with the applause there's a lot of heartache on the bumpy road to fame.

The Commitments is what some would classify as a "small" film, unlike Parker's recent Hollywood numbers. It contains no stars, car chases or special effects. It is a picture about character, first and foremost, and Parker has peopled his film perfectly.

Each of its performers add a dimension to Parker's strong direction and the rich screenplay. The music is superb and the songs are performed by the film's cast. Beautifully acted by a terrific ensemble, and shot on location in Dublin, *The Commitments* is a funny, truthful and totally entertaining movie. Another gem from a gifted director.

DOC HOLLYWOOD

(M) 15+

Michael J Fox is in top form as an ambitious doctor, Ben Stone who, after completing his internship at a Washington DC public hospital, decides to head for the good life. He wants to live in sun-drenched Beverly Hills, that land full of vacuous bikini-clad women and easy money, as a plastic surgeon. He has his life all mapped out for him, until he has a slight accident and ends up stranded in a small country town called Grady, whose chief claim to fame is that it's the squash capital of the universe.

The town's local judge is incensed that Dr. Stone crashed his expensive car into his new fence, so he sentences him to a few days undertaking community service at the local hospital. Once there, his once-ordered life is turned upside-down when he falls in love with his unusual ambulance driver. As for the townspeople, they end up having an effect on a brash young egotist whose life is heading for a tumble.

Don't expect too much artistry from *Doc Hollywood*, but rather a relaxing, quietly comic film about change. It's a charming movie which washes over you and gives a good feeling at its conclusion. Sure it's sentimental, sure it's hoaky cornball stuff, but thanks to a tight script, caring direction by Britain's Michael Caton-Jones (*Scandal*, *Memphis Belle*) and a feast of top performances by some of America's great character actors, including Barnard Hughes, Woody Harrelson (of *Cheers* fame) and David Ogden Stiers (Major Winchester in *M*A*S*H*), *Doc Hollywood* emerges as an unexpected delight and a real charmer of a comedy.

a critic's view of films in current theatrical release

THE NAKED GUN 2 1/2 -
THE SMELL OF FEAR

(PG)

This is a movie where all one's critical faculties are well and truly left at the door. Forget about being a serious movie critic; this film is for the insane and inane in all of us. Leslie Nielsen is, for better or for worse, back as that master of ineptitude, Lt. Frank Drebin. This time around, Drebin is in hot pursuit of a group of environmental terrorists out to usurp the world's primary source of energy. At least I think that's what the film is about. No matter, this is not a film whereby plot has much consequence. You just sit back and allow yourself to be bombarded by the visual gags and brilliant one-liners.

It's a riot of a film, imaginatively directed by David Zucker, who pokes fun at everything, including the film's closing credits. Some of the jokes don't quite work, but overall it's a mindless hoot of a film, featuring a brilliantly deadpan Leslie Nielsen, back as Drebin, flanked by some comic co-stars who are perfect foils for Drebin's stupidity. From the film's hilarious opening sequence through to the end, this new *Naked Gun* is a comic blast which will leave you in stitches.

CITY SLICKERS

(PG)

Good comedies that focus more on character than situation are a rarity, and while *City Slickers* has an air of predictability about it, the film emerges as a light, warm-hearted piece, nicely scripted and competently directed. Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern and Bruno Kirby are all superb as three close friends who, every year, travel on some fairly outrageous excursions. This time around, in an attempt to solve their particular mid-life crises, they head west on a real cattle drive where they confront their own fears, settling their restless lives and personal traumas.

Mitch (Crystal) is celebrating his 39th birthday and is depressed, with a dead-end job and a seemingly staid relationship with his wife; Phil (Stern) is deeply miserable and suicidal when the wife he loathes discovers that he's had an affair with a cashier; Ed (Kirby), a one-time philandering bachelor, has now married and is frightened of starting a family in case he's unfaithful. Each has his particular cross to bear, and on this Western odyssey, they look to find true friendship and happiness.

Like *Doc Hollywood*, *City Slickers* is a charming comedy, beautifully directed by Ron Underwood (*Tremors*). It's a movie which has everything: adventure, tenderness, a calf that virtually steals the film, great dialogue and a gem of a performance by Jack Palance who

overshadows everyone. There are plenty of laughs in what star Crystal calls a "coming of middle-age story." It's by no means a great film, but it's a warm, funny and truthful movie about friendship.

MY FATHER'S GLORY

(G)

This magnificent French film was one of France's most commercially successful films of last year and has been equally successful outside of its native country. Based on Marcel Pagnol's own autobiography, *My Father's Glory* is a delicate film about childhood and memories. It revolves around 11-year old Marcel, and the adventures he shares with his teacher-father whilst on a memorable vacation in the country.

Under the sensitive direction of Yves Robert, it is an example of French cinema at its best, a glowing, finely executed masterpiece that explores with sensitivity and gentle humour, the view of the world as seen through a child's eyes. There is also a sequel, *My Mother's Castle*, set for release later this year. Meanwhile, lovers of intelligent cinema should gather in droves to see this masterful and poetic classic of a film.

SHORT TAKES

Jungle Fever is Spike Lee's most powerful film to date. Wesley Snipes plays a successful advertising executive, and happily married man, who falls in love with a working-class Italian, superbly played by Annabella Sciorra. It's bad enough that he's married; it's the fact that he's also Black that causes its share of problems. Spike Lee's film is a relentless, hard-hitting exploration of a perennial social concern. It's vivid, brilliantly acted and painfully honest. Though a trifle long, Lee has made a film as much about the apparent divisions of New York urban society, as interracial relationships. It's a powerhouse of a movie that will create considerable discussion after the curtain closes.

The Magic Riddle is a delightful film for young children. Produced and directed by Australia's Yoram Gross, this richly textured little film is a fairytale about young Cinderella's stepmother's determination to prevent her finding her father's will. Along the way, she seeks help from a variety of beloved characters: Pinocchio, the Seven Dwarfs and of course a handsome prince. Not as elaborate as Disney animation, but given its budget, is immensely charming with a terrific musical score to boot.

Paul Fischer



City Slickers



Naked Gun 2 1/2 - The Smell Of Fear



My Father's Glory

JOCELYN MOORHOUSE

director



Few Australian directors have received more acclaim and sudden international recognition in so small a time frame as Jocelyn Moorhouse. With just one feature film to her credit, *Proof*, Jocelyn has established herself as an original, creative talent as both a writer/director. Her decision to become a director, stems from her own love of movies and other artistic obsessions, as she explains to me from a Sydney hotel suite on the eve of the movie's opening.

"Part of my desire to be a film maker is that I've always loved films. My parents always used to take us so it became a part of my life. I also made a calculated decision that I wanted to do something with my life that would bring together a lot of my passions, which are art, literature, music and particularly photography. I kind of remember working it out when I was a teenager and saying: 'well, actually, I can get all of that fulfilment in movies.' I guess I was pretty optimistic, wasn't I? So I set out to make it my career."

Indeed she did. She studied directing at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, from where she graduated in 1984. After graduation, she was offered a job in the Channel 7 Drama Unit as a script editor and writer, honing and developing her own skills as a scriptwriter. She wrote and directed a short film, *The Siege Of Barton's Bathroom*, which she later developed into a 12-part TV series.

But it's her first feature film *Proof*, a highly original, quirky comedy-drama which Moorhouse both wrote and directed, that has won her plaudits both here and overseas; it was the major success story at this year's Cannes Film Festival and was featured in both the Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals. The

film, which opened in Sydney and Melbourne last month, is the unusual story of Martin (Hugo Weaving) a mistrusting blind photographer, and his relationships with Celia, a manipulative housekeeper and Andy, a good-natured kitchen-hand.

Like all good writing, Jocelyn based her script on a fair amount of truth. "A friend of mine told me about someone whom she'd met, who'd gone blind and continued to take photos. That in itself was enough to get me interested. She then told me that he got his children to describe the content of the photos, and I thought that was astonishing and had a lot of potential. But it sounded too much of a happy ending in terms of story material." It was a great story from life, but in order for Jocelyn to write a movie, she needed a lot more dark areas. "So I decided, what if the guy had never seen, and therefore taking photos was in a way trying to get some concept of what sight is; and what if he had nobody he could trust and he has to find someone to trust to describe the photos." Writing her first feature script didn't come easy. "I needed a lot of energy and a hell of a lot of discipline." From the time Jocelyn began developing the idea for *Proof*, through to its final draft took three years, and she was still as passionate at the end of that period, as she was from the outset. "It really haunted me; that's how I knew how to hang on to it."

When looking at the film, one's first impression is how snugly the film's three principal actors - Hugo Weaving, Russell Crowe and Genevieve Picot - fit into their respective characters. While Jocelyn is thrilled about her perfect casting, she didn't write the script with any particular actor in mind. "I'm so amazed that I got the cast that I considered to be perfect for those roles. But I always imagined Martin looking a lot like Hugo does, and I always imagined Celia and Andy looking a lot like they do."

While strong characterisation is a major strength of *Proof*, it's also a complex, thematic work. For the writer/director, its dominant themes are "exploring Man's fear of trust, of making that leap of faith, and a fear of betrayal; the NEED to have proof that those that we love, love us back which I think is really universal. And it's extremely vulnerable of us, because we can never have real proof."

The proof of Jocelyn's success is its extraordinary acclaim in Cannes and its well deserved reviews locally and abroad. Whoever said Australian cinema is on the decline? To prove her diversity as film maker and storyteller, Jocelyn is currently writing a thriller called *Snake In The Grass*, which she describes as "really scary and quite different from anything I've ever done." Jocelyn Moorhouse is a director going places; she's an extraordinary talent.

LISA HENSLEY

actress



In this age of competition, being in actress is a tough business. Lisa Hensley is a major talent; beautiful, bright, intuitive and full of passion, she is becoming recognised as a new star, and deservedly so. What has really established her is the new ABC mini-series *Brides Of Christ*, which premiered early this month. Co-starring Josephine Burns, Naomi Watts, Russell Crowe and Oscar-winner Brenda Fricker (*My Left Foot*), *Brides* is the story of two Catholic nuns over a seven year period.

"I play Sister Mary Paul. The series traces the life of mine and Josephine Burn's character. It starts off with us, and we're two nuns following us through seven years as we become teachers. It follows my life in and out of the convent." She largely had to rely on her imaginative skills because "I don't have any nuns who are close friends or anything, but we had some ex-nuns working as advisors on the series, who were tremendously helpful." Though she is very pleased with her work, it didn't come easy. "For me it was very emotionally gruelling, because I have to cry so much. But it's also one of the most satisfying things I've ever done."

She describes *Brides Of Christ* as "being a beautiful example of faith. It's also so indicative of Australia but without being a cliched Australian production." Based on the strength and critical acclaim of the series and Lisa's own performance, the actress will continue to impress audiences for years to come. "I really love what I'm doing; I want to do it for the rest of my life." No doubt the best is yet to come.

Paul Fischer